CLAIMS

The invention claimed is:

1. A system comprising:

a communication network;

a station communicatively linked to the communication network, the station having an output and an interface; and

a head-end having at least one database configured to store programs including an audio content, the head-end configured to receive a request from the station via the communication network for a desired one of the programs, the head-end configured to verify the request by determining an identification, transmitting a first portion of the desired program to the station via the communication network based upon the request verification, and recording an association between the identification and the desired program, the head-end configured to suspend transmission of a second portion of the program based upon detection of an indication to suspend transmission, the head-end configured to transmit the second portion of the program based upon detection of an indication to resume transmission and based upon stored bookmark data indicating starting location in the program of the second portion.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end is configured to generated and store the stored bookmark data upon detection of the indication to suspend transmission.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is configured to generate and store the stored bookmark data.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end is configured to determine the indication to suspend by the station ceasing communication on the

communication network due to one of the following conditions: the station is a telephone and the user hangs up, the station is a cellular telephone and the cellular signals has been lost, the station is a computer and the computer has stopped transmitting an active keep alive network signal on to the communication network, the keep alive network signal being one of the following: a heartbeat and a periodic stream of acknowledgements.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end in configured to determine that the indication to suspend from a request to suspend sent from the station to the head-end via the communication network.

6. The system of claim 5 wherein the station further includes controls and the request to suspend is send from the station based upon at least one of the station controls being activated.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein the at least one of the station controls being activated includes at least one of the following: save control, pause control, and bookmark control.

8. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end is configured to determine that the indication to resume is a request to resume sent from the station to the head-end via the communication network.

9. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is a cellular telephone and the communication network is a cellular communication network.

10. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface of the station includes a save control, the station being configured to generate the bookmark data based upon activation of the save control.

11. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface of the station includes a bookmark control, the station being configured to generate the bookmark data based upon activation of the bookmark control.

12. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface of the station includes a save control, the head-end being configured to generate the bookmark data based upon activation of the save control.

13. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface of the station includes a bookmark control, the head-end being configured to generate the bookmark data based upon activation of the bookmark control.

14. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end is configured to store the bookmark data.

15. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is a non-cellular telephone.

16. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is a computer.

17. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is a telephone and a computer.

18. The system of claim 1 wherein the communication network is at least one of the following: a telephone network and a computer network.

19. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is configured to store the bookmark data.

20. The system of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of stations other than the station, the plurality of stations including at least one of the following: a cellular telephone, a computer workstation, and a non-cellular telephone.

21. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end is configured to activate an instance of a media player to play each program requested.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein each of the media player instances are configured to track current position of their program being played, the head-end configured to send data on the current program positions to the station and other stations receiving the programs.

23. The system of claim 1 wherein the request verification by the head-end is based upon at least one of the following: a subscription plan, a content rating of the desired program, and payment history associated with a user of the telephone.

24. The system of claim 1 wherein the at least one database of the head-end includes at least one of the following data representations: user, station, episode, program data, series, favorites, player, recent, bookmark, and synopsis.

25. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a join button configured to, upon activation, join a first user activating the join button to a conference with other users of a program being received from the head-end.

26. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a mark button configured to, upon activation, bookmark a segment of a program being received from the head-end for subsequent retrieval.

27. The system of claim 26 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a goto button configured to, upon activation, retrieve a segment of a program previously bookmarked with the mark button.

28. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a send button configured to, upon activation, send either a program or a link of the program being received from the head-end to another user.

29. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a drop button configured to, upon activation, abandon playing of a program being received from the head-end.

30. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a save button configured to, upon activation, save a program being received from the head-end for future play.

31. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a skip forward button configured to, upon activation, skip forward play of a program being received from the head-end.

32. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a play button configured to, upon activation, begin playing of a program stored on the head-end.

33. The system of claim 32 wherein the program is subsequent in a series to a program having been just played.

34. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with a pause button configured to, upon activation, halt playing of a program stored on the head-end.

35. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes an in-progress user interface with at least one of the following displayed: program title, author name, artist name, chapter name, song name, and speaker name.

36. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes a select show dialog based upon voice recognition.

37. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes a selection menu with at least one of the following: a select button configured to select a program stored on the head-end and a clear button configured to clear a program selection previously made.

38. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes a selection menu with a selection prompt associated with selection of a conference call associated with the desired program.

39. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes a selection menu with a resume last pick.

40. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface includes a selection menu with a select show dialog.

41. The system of claim 1 wherein the at least one database of the head-end includes a holdings database configured to store information regarding at least current users of the head-end, the information including data about programs stored in the at least one database being used by the users.

42. The system of claim 1 wherein the identification determined by the head-end is based upon at least one of the following: a caller-identification code and an internet protocol address.

43. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end includes cache servers located in different geographical areas.

44. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end further includes an access manager and a media server, the access manager being configured to accept and process commands and queries from the station via a receive buffer and is configured to transmit status and programs back to the station via a transmit buffer, the access manager configured to control the media server to serve programs stored on the at least one database.

45. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is a cellular telephone configured to receive audio and data over separate communication channels and the communication network includes separate voice and data communication channels.

46. The system of claim 1 wherein the output is an earpiece.

47. The system of claim 1 wherein the output is a display and a speaker.

48. The system of claim 1 wherein the station further includes a buffer to store received portions of the desired program before being played by the output.

49. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is a computer and a telephone, the computer configured to receive at least text data from the head-end via the communication network, the head-end further configured to transmit at least text data to the computer and audio data to the telephone via the communication network.

50. The system of claim 49 wherein the communication network includes a telephone network and the Internet.

51. The system of claim 1 wherein the station is a telephone configured to receive text data in addition to audio.

52. The system of claim 1 wherein the communication network includes at least one of the following: a telephone network, a local area network, a wide area network, and the Internet.

53. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end is configured to receive and re-transmit a user's voice and to disguise the user's voice before re-transmission when indicated by the user.

54. The system of claim 1 wherein the identification determined by the head-end has a public part known by general users and a private part know by selected users.

55. The system of claim 1 wherein the identification determined by the head-end is at least in part associated with location of the station and the head-end is further configured to transmit a version of the program based upon location of the station.

56. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end is further configured to transmit the desired program only if the request verification determined by the head-end indicates that the identification is associated with a subscriber of services including the desired program.

57. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end is configured to transmit an advertisement in addition to transmission of the desired program based upon the identification determined by the head-end.

58. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface of the station is configured to navigated the programs stored on the at least one database of the head-end by at least one of the following approaches: episotic, serial, and chapterwise organizations.

59. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface of the station is configured to provide a send selection capability that when activated by a user of the station sends a request to the head-end via the communication network to send information associated with the desired program to another user.

60. The system of claim 59 wherein the information includes at least a portion of the desired program.

61. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface of the station is configured to bookmark a portion of the desired program such that when the bookmark is activated the head-end commences transmission of the desired program from the portion beginning.

62. The system of claim 1 the interface of the station is configured to display at least one of the following: time remaining of the desired program when being played on the telephone and title of the desired program being played.

63. The system of claim 1 wherein the station interface is configured to facilitate selection of the desired program from the programs in the at least one database of the head-end.

64. The system of claim 63 wherein the station interface is configured to display a selection list of at least a portion of the programs stored on the at least one database of the head-end.

65. The system of claim 64 wherein the station interface further includes a select button configured to provide capability to a user of the station for selection of the programs stored in the at least one database of the head-end.

66. The system of claim 1 wherein the head-end further includes at least one buffer configured to store at least a portion of the desired program stored in the at least one database and requested by the station to expedite transmission of the desired program from the head-end to the station.

67. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface of the station includes at least one of the following: a keypad, a keyboard, a mouse, a joypad, buttons, a pen interface, and a voice command system.

68. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface is configured to be presented on the output.

69. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface is configured to be presented on other than the output.

70. The system of claim 1 wherein the at least one database of the head-end stores information including at least one of the following: representations of subject matter of the programs, availability of the programs, identification of users currently using each of the programs, preferences and listening status of each of the current users and the head-end is configured to transmit the information to station upon request of the head-end by the station.

71. The system of claim 1 wherein the association between the identification and the desired program recorded by the head-end is further configured for billing of a user of the station that used the interface to generate the request for the program.

72. The system of claim 1 wherein the program is one of the following: a song, a news segment, an audio book, a talk show, a traffic report, and an advertisement.

73. A method comprising:

providing a communication network;

providing a station with an output and an interface;

communicatively linking the station to the communication network;

providing a head-end having at least one database configured to store programs including an audio content; receiving a request at the head-end from the station via the communication network for a desired one of the programs;

verifying the request by determining an identification; transmitting a first portion of the desired program from the head-end to the station via the communication network based upon the request verification;

recording an association between the identification and the desired program;

suspending transmission of a second portion of the program from the head-end based upon detection of an indication to suspend transmission;

generating and storing bookmark data based upon the indication to suspend;

transmiting from the head-end the second portion of the program based upon detection of an indication to resume transmission and based upon the stored bookmark data indicating starting location in the program of the second portion.

74. The method of claim 73 wherein the bookmark data is generated and stored at the head-end.

75. The method of claim 73 wherein the bookmark data is generated and stored at the station.

76. The method of claim 73 wherein determining the indication to suspend is based upon the station ceasing communication on the communication network due to one of the following conditions: the station is a telephone and the user hangs up, the station is a cellular telephone and the cellular signals has been lost, the station is a computer and the computer has stopped transmitting an active keep alive network signal on to the communication network, the keep alive network signal being one of the following: a heartbeat and a periodic stream of acknowledgements.

77. The method of claim 73 wherein the indication to suspend is determined based upon a request to suspend sent from the station to the head-end via the communication network.

78. The method of claim 77 wherein the request to suspend is send from the station based upon at least one control of the station being activated.

79. The method of claim 73 wherein the indication to resume is determined based upon a request to resume being sent from the station to the head-end via the communication network.

80. The method of claim 73 wherein the station is provided as a cellular telephone and the communication network is provided as a cellular communication network.

81. The method of claim 73 wherein the station generates the bookmark data based upon activation of a save control of the station.

82. The method of claim 73 wherein the station generates the bookmark data based upon activation of a bookmark control of the station.

83. The method of claim 73 wherein the head-end generates the bookmark data based upon activation of a save control of the station.

84. The method of claim 73 wherein the head-end generates the bookmark data based upon activation of a bookmark control of the station.

85. The method of claim 73 wherein the bookmark data is stored on the head-end.

86. The method of claim 73 wherein the station is provided as a non-cellular telephone.

87. The method of claim 73 wherein the station is provided as a computer.

88. The method of claim 73 wherein the station is provided as a telephone and a computer.

89. The method of claim 73 wherein the communication network is provided as at least one of the following: a telephone network and a computer network.

90. The method of claim 73 wherein the station stores the bookmark data.

91. The method of claim 73 further comprising providing a plurality of stations other than the station, the plurality of stations including at least one of the following: a cellular telephone, a computer workstation, and a non-cellular telephone.

92. The method of claim 73 further comprising activating at the head-end an instance of a media player to play each program requested.

93. The method of claim 91 further comprising tracking on the media players current position of their program being played and sending data from the head-end configured on the current program positions to the station and other stations receiving the programs.

94. The method of claim 73 wherein the verifying the request is done by the head-end based upon at least one of the following: a subscription plan, a content rating of the desired program, and payment history associated with a user of the telephone.

95. The method of claim 73 further comprising joining a first user activating the join button to a conference with other users of a program being received from the head-end.

96. The method of claim 73 further comprising bookmarking a segment of a program being received from the head-end for subsequent retrieval upon activation of a mark button on the station interface.

97. The method of claim 73 further comprising sending either a program or a link of the program being received from the head-end to another user upon activation of a send button on the station interface.

98. The method of claim 73 further comprising abandoning play of a program being received from the head-end upon activation of a drop button on the station interface.

99. The method of claim 73 further comprising saving a program being received from the head-end for future play upon activation of a save button on the station interface.

100. The method of claim 73 further comprising skipping forward play of a program being received from the head-end upon activation of a skip button on the station interface.

101. The method of claim 73 further comprising beginning play of a program stored on the head-end upon activation of a play button on the station interface.

102. The method of claim 73 further comprising halting play of a program stored on the head-end based upon activation of a pause button on the station interface.

103. The method of claim 73 further comprising recognizing voice input in conjunction with the station interface.

104. The method of claim 73 further comprising selecting the programs stored on the head-end with the station interface.

105. The method of claim 73 further comprising selecting a conference call involving users of the desired program with the station interface.

106. The method of claim 73 further comprising storing information regarding at least current users of the head-end, the information including data about programs stored in the at least one database being used by the users.

107. The method of claim 73 wherein determining the identification -end is based upon at least one of the following: a caller-identification code and an internet protocol address.

108. The method of claim 73 wherein providing the head-end includes providing cache servers located in different geographical areas.

109. The method of claim 73 wherein providing the head-end further includes providing an access manager and a media server, the access manager being configured to accept and process commands and queries from the station via a receive buffer and is configured to transmit status and programs back to the station via a transmit buffer, the access manager configured to control the media server to serve programs stored on the at least one database.

110. The method of claim 73 wherein the station is provided as a cellular telephone configured to receive audio and data over separate communication channels and the communication network includes separate voice and data communication channels.

111. The method of claim 73 wherein the output is provided as an earpiece.

112. The method of claim 73 wherein the output is provided as a display and a speaker.

113. The method of claim 73 further comprising buffering at the station portions of the desired program before it is played by the output.

114. The method of claim 73 wherein the station is provided as a computer and a telephone, the computer configured to receive at least text data from the head-end via the communication network, the head-end further configured to transmit at least text data to the computer and audio data to the telephone via the communication network.

115. The method of claim 114 wherein the communication network is provided as a telephone network and the Internet.

116. The method of claim 73 wherein the station is provided as a telephone configured to receive text data in addition to audio.

117. The method of claim 73 wherein the communication network provided to include at least one of the following: a telephone network, a local area network, a wide area network, and the Internet.

118. The method of claim 73 further comprising receiving at the head-end and re-transmitting a user's voice and to disguise the user's voice before re-transmission when indicated by the user.

119. The method of claim 73 wherein determining the identification includes a public part known by general users and a private part know by selected users.

120. The method of claim 73 wherein the determining the identification is at least in part associated with location of the station and the head-end is further configured to transmit a version of the program based upon location of the station.

121. The method of claim 73 wherein transmitting the desired program is done only if the request verification determined by the head-end indicates that the identification is associated with a subscriber of services including the desired program.

122. The method of claim 73 further comprising transmitting an advertisement in addition to transmitting the desired program based upon determining the identification.

123. The method of claim 73 further comprising navigating with the station interface the programs stored on the at least one database of the head-end by at least one of the following approaches: episotic, serial, and chapterwise organizations.

124. The method of claim 73 further comprising sending information associated with the desired program to another user upon activation of a send command with the station interface.

125. The method of claim 124 wherein the sending information includes sending at least a portion of the desired program.

126. The method of claim 73 further comprising bookmarking from the station a portion of the desired program and subsequently activating the bookmark from the station to instigate transmission from the head-end to the station of the desired program from the portion beginning.

127. The method of claim 73 further comprising presenting from the interface of the station is configured at least one of the following: time remaining of the desired program when being played on the telephone and title of the desired program being played.

128. The method of claim 73 further comprising facilitating selection of the desired program from the programs in the at least one database of the head-end through use of the station interface.

129. The method of claim 128 further comprising presenting through use of the interface a selection list of at least a portion of the programs stored on the at least one database of the head-end.

130. The method of claim 73 further comprising storing in a buffer on the head-end at least a portion of the desired program stored in the at least one database and requested by the station to expedite transmission of the desired program from the head-end to the station.

131. The method of claim 73 wherein the interface of the station is provided to include at least one of the following: a keypad, a keyboard, a mouse, a joypad, buttons, a pen interface, and a voice command system.

132. The method of claim 73 wherein the interface is presented on the output.

133. The method of claim 73 wherein the interface is presented on other than the output.

134. The method of claim 73 further comprising storing in the at least one database of the head-end information including at least one of the following: representations of subject matter of the programs, availability of the programs, identification of users currently using each of the programs, preferences and listening status of each of the current users and the head-end is configured to transmit the information to station upon request of the head-end by the station.

135. The method of claim 73 wherein the recording the association between the identification and the desired program is done to bill a user of the station that used the interface to generate the request for the program.

136. The method of claim 73 wherein determining the identification identifies one of the following: the station and a user of the station.